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UNCLAS BANGKOK 001737

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DS COMMAND CENTER, DS/IP/EAP, DS/ITA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [TH](#) [PHUM](#)

SUBJECT: PEACEFUL PROTEST IN BANGKOK 03/08/2005

REF: RSO SPOT REPORT 03/08/2005

1. (U) SUMMARY: On 3/08/2005, approximately 35 individuals staged a 30-minute peaceful protest at the US Embassy in Bangkok. The protesters sought the return of an antique royal headdress, currently on loan to an exhibit in San Francisco, from the Philadelphia Museum of Art in the United States. This is the third such protest regarding the return of the royal headdress in a week. Thai Police(RTP), Local Guard Force(LGF), Surveillance Detection(SD), and Regional Security Office(RSO) personnel were present during the protest, which ended without incident. The group's leader presented a letter to an Embassy official. Local print and broadcast media were present. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) At approx. 0800 hrs, RTP informed the RSO that a protest, by 35-40 people, was going to occur at 1100 hrs in front of the US Embassy. Embassy personnel and facilities were alerted by RSO. Marine Security Guards(MSG,s) and LGF were placed on alert. SD personnel were dispatched to the staging area to obtain information.

3. The group numbered 35 at its maximum and was lead by Member of Parliament Chuwit Kamolvisit, a notorious (former brothel owner) but popular member of the opposition Chart Thai political party. The group demanded the return of an Ayutthaya era royal headdress alleged to have been illegally smuggled out of Thailand in the mid-1900's, now owned by the Philadelphia Art Museum and on an exhibition in California.

4. This was the third demonstration in less than a week regarding the return of the royal headdress. RTP and embassy security were present throughout the demonstration. The leader of the group spoke for approximately 15 minutes and then presented a letter to an Embassy Political Officer. The demonstrators were not violent nor did they conduct any acts of civil disobedience. By 1215 hrs, the situation had returned to normal.

BOYCE